ECONEWS #220

EcoNews is a free monthly newsletter, funded by your kind donations. It dreams of a world blessed by the harmony of nature, the pleasures of community, and the joys of personal fulfillment, guided and protected by our active citizenship.

To receive EcoNews by email, sign up at www.earthfuture.com/econews. To receive it by mail send your address to Guy Dauncey, EcoNews, 395 Conway Rd, Victoria V9E 2B9.

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Print, postage	$668	$675	$850
Editorial	$450	$450	$450
Donations	$835	$1070	**You?**
Advertising	$0	$95	
Balance	$963	$1003	

THE ECO-PERSONALS

$5 a line. Max 5 lines, non-profits, low-income free. 1" box ad $50

* **Housesitter available**. Salt Springer attending Royal Roads available for Victoria area housesitting, Jan through March. References! Leslie Wallace freerangemind@shaw.ca 250.653.9631

WHAT'S MISSING?

Victoria is blessed with an abundance of environmental groups which work on a wide range of issues, and make no mistake, they make things happen. But conversely, when they are absent, it's much harder to make change happen. At the local level, we need three things to change the world:

(1) a progressive majority on city council;
(2) supportive staff at City Hall; and
(3) a well-organized non-profit citizens' organization which can do original work, put pressure on the council, and support them when the going gets hot.

So as we begin the New Year, it's good to note what's missing, in case anyone feels inspired to make something happen.

ZERO WASTE VICTORIA?

First, we don't have any group that is focused on reducing our ecological footprint and achieving zero waste. Our Region's goal is for 60% of our solid waste to be diverted from the landfill by 2013, 70% by 2015 and 90% by 2020. In reality, our recycling/diversion fell from 42% in 1998 to 32% in 2007, and then climbed back up to 43% in 2010, using the 1989 total waste per person baseline number of 671 kg per year. The CRD's Solid Waste Management Team does a great job with a host of initiatives, but can they jump from 43% (maybe 45% in 2011) to 60% by the end of next year? Almost certainly not, unless we put our shoulder to the wheel by forming an active, passionate group. Does anyone feel motivated to create Zero Waste Victoria?

GREEN TRANSPORT VICTORIA?

Secondly, we don't have an effective group that is focused on transportation planning as a whole, including walking, cycling, transit, LRT, rail, bike-sharing, car-sharing, smart land-use planning, electric vehicles, and all the other components of a zero carbon future. We have some of the pieces in the form of the Greater Victoria Cycling Coalition, the Victoria Car Share Coop, and Island Transformations, but there's a conspicuous absence of a citizens' organization that can tie the pieces together and drive the action. Anyone feel inspired to speak to the existing groups, and see what's possible?

GREEN LEADERS VICTORIA?

Thirdly, I have felt for years that we lack a support and encouragement group for up and coming young green leaders who have an idea but who lack the support, the skills or the connections needed to make it happen. Does anyone feel inspired to organize and lead a monthly group, to see what happens?

INVESTING IN LOCAL CHANGE

The economy is …. well, where is it? Disappearing into fat cat bonuses? Being invested in the tar sands? Transition Victoria has teamed up with Vancity and Focus Magazine to put on an exciting evening at the Ambrosia Centre about investing your money in local sustainable, ethical businesses that are building a more self-reliant economy. Wow. That's exactly what's needed. On Tuesday January 31st they've assembled a team of six people who will be informing and inspiring us as to the possibilities. Diary. Pen. Write. http://transitionvictoria.ning.com/events

PENDER ISLANDS TRANSITION

They're two small islands with just 2500 people who live there, but they've got a lot happening, including the Farmland Project, Moving Around Pender, the non-profit Recycling Depot, Restorative Justice, the School Nut Tree Project, a new Community Protein and Starch Growing Project, an Energy Research Project, the Farmers Institute with its Farmers' Market and Fall Fair, the Conservancy Association, the Pender Choir, the Quilt Makers, the Folk Dancers, the New Year's Lantern Festival - and I'm sure a lot more. On January 31st Pender Community Transition is holding an Open Pender Organization Conversation for anyone who cares about their community becoming more resilient, connected and Earth-friendly, to discuss how they can combine and cooperate. Imagine if this much activity was happening in each of Greater Victoria's many neighbourhoods. See pendercommunitytransition.ca.

THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING

As the Occupy Movement takes time out to re-morph and re-organize, YES! Magazine from Bainbridge Island, just across the water, has scrambled to produce a great little book called *This Changes Everything - Occupy Wall Street and the 99% Movement*. The movement named the core issue of our time as the overwhelming power of Wall Street and the large corporations, and the book takes us into the heart of the new movement with contributions from Naomi Klein, David Korten, Ralph Nader and activists who were there from the beginning. It is a great source of thoughtful inspiration, and editor Sarah van Gelder's essay at the start is maybe the best of all. "The system is broken in so many ways that it's dizzying to try to name them all." Make no mistake, this urgent dialogue, fused with the need to remake our world so that our activities harmonize with Nature will be the defining debate of the coming decade. The book is American, and demonstrates the best of American courage and character, even as the pride of empire dishevels itself into the pandemonium of inequity and anger. It's just $6.95 from YES Magazine, or $25 for a package of five, and all royalties go to the Occupy Wall Street movement. www.yesmagazine.org

PROTECT O.U.R. ECOVILLAGE

O.U.R. EcoVillage in Shawnigan Lake has been demonstrating, teaching and inspiring the arts of sustainability for twelve years. During 2011, over ten thousand people passed through to visit, work or learn. They have taken a 25 acre farm, and shown how the land can be protected from subdivision while making a transformative difference in the world.

To achieve this, however, the founder had to take out a personal residential mortgage to hold the ecovillage lands in trust for the project, as the only means available at the time. This mortgage is now up for renewal, and the Ecovillage aspires to a new model of syndicated community-ownership in keeping with its ideals. To the conventional mortgage world, O.U.R Ecovillage is a very square peg that simply won't fit into their ready-made round holes.

There is some urgency around the problem, since the private mortgage expires on March 1st, 2011, and if a solution is not in place by then they'll be forced to sell the land. To solve the problem, an invitation is going out to anyone who supports O.U.R. Ecovillage to make a charitable tax-deductible donation to help buy down the mortgage, channeled through The Land Conservancy, or to redirect an RRSP or cash investment into a new syndicated Ethical Investment Mortgage administered by Concentra Financial, which provides financial intermediation and trust solutions to credit unions across Canada. The property appraisal is high, so it looks set to be a very low risk mortgage.

Over the years, they have developed a new legal structure designed specifically for cooperative and community ownership, so if the new mortgage works out, it will be a powerful model for other non-profits and community organizations.

You can make a donation on-line at www.ourecovillage.org. To become an RRSP partner in the new mortgage, contact protect@ourecvillage.org or 250-743-3067. At the time of writing, they had raised $170,000 towards the goal of $400,000, and they're working seven days a week to make it happen. If you want to visit, there's a public tour on February 4th or you can call for a personalized tour.

ORGANIC FARMING IS MORE PROFITABLE

Yes - repeat those five words over and over, so that they are firmly imprinted in your brain ready for the next time you have a debate with a conservative believer in conventional farming, chemicals and all. *More profitable*. And that's in addition to restoring healthy soil, restoring wildlife, requiring much less energy, storing carbon in the soil, providing the vital nutrients that we need for our health, ending nitrogen-run-off pollution, and removing the cancer dangers that have been linked to farmland chemicals. And oh, did I mention the equal or better yields? How many times have you heard someone declare that if the whole world went organic we'd have to tear down the rainforests because the yields are so much lower? Well, it's simply not true.

In the heart of America's farmland, Iowa State University's Long-Term Agro-ecological Research Experiment has been raising side-by-side corn, soybeans and oats for 13 years, and they have found that the organic yields are equal or slightly better than their chemically-raised counterparts. Their 12 year study for alfalfa and their 8 year study for wheat show similar results.

And when the day is done, and the dollars are added up, the organic crops earn $200 an acre a year more than the conventional crops. Tell that to your skeptical friends and watch their brain-cells adjust to the new reality.

The Rodale Institute in Pennsylvania has conducted a similar 30-year study and come to similar conclusions, plus the bonus that in drought years, organic yields are 31% higher than from conventional farming. The genetically modified drought-tolerant varieties increased their yields by only 6 to 13%. Yea, organic!

Rodale's 30-year income comparisons are even better. They show an average net return of $558 per acre per year for organic farming, compared to $190 for conventional - that's a 300% higher income. How long will conventional farmers be able to resist the lure of more income? Organic wheat was the most profitable at $835 an acre. No-till conventional corn was the least, earning a miserable $27 an acre.

The first three years are the most difficult for organic growers, before the land has been certified organic, but even during these years, their yields remain competitive.

And here's another added bonus - a UN study shows that organic farms create 30% more jobs per acre. The organic farmer's money is creating jobs, rather than buying chemicals.

The remaining problem is the huge farming subsidies that chemical farming receives in the US. Correcting this imbalance is now a high priority for US farm activists.

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www.earthfuture.com/gardenpath/Seeds_Catalogue.htm

ACTION OF THE MONTH

CLIMATE CHANGE CAUSES EXTREME WEATHER

If there's one prediction that's tragically safe, it's that 2012 will bring more extreme storms, floods, droughts and wildfires. The new Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report on climate change and natural disasters, authored by 220 scientists from 62 countries, found that it's 99% certain that hot days have become more common; 66% likely that climate change has caused more heatwaves, intense rainstorms and extreme high tides; 90% certain that heatwaves will get worse; and 66% likely that hurricanes, intense rain and landslides will increase.

Action: Write to Premier Christy Clark, and urge her to make action on climate solutions a top priority. As well as everything else, the new findings have worrying implications for provincial and municipal insurance, which is often where the bills end up.

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